

WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

1. A data processing system, comprising:

a user interface operable to display information to a user and to receive commands from a user accessing a digital model data set;

5 a digital model data set comprising data associated with the form of mechanical structures; and

a business process attribute data set linked to the digital model data set such that various elements within the digital model data set are linked to business process attributes within the business process attribute data set such that users of the data processing system are displayed business process attribute display elements when a display element associated with a mechanical component defined by the digital model data set is displayed to the user.

2. The data processing system of Claim 1 wherein the business process attribute comprises quality information defining a quality level parameter associated with a component represented in the digital model data set.

3. The data processing system of Claim 1 wherein the business process attribute comprises safety information defining a safety level parameter associated with a component represented in the digital model data set.

4. The data processing system of Claim 1 wherein the business process attribute comprises revision information defining a revision parameter associated with a component represented in the digital model data set.

5. The data processing system of Claim 1 wherein the business process attribute comprises an information address attribute comprising a network address associated with information related to a component associated with data within the digital model data set.

6. The system of data processing system of Claim 5 wherein the information address attribute comprises a hypertext link address that when displayed to a user of the system and activated by the user of a system will result in the activation of a browser program which is operable to retrieve information stored at the information attribute hypertext link address.

7. The data processing system of Claim 1 and further comprising a knowledge base data set engine coupled to and operable to access various knowledge base data sets, the knowledge base data set engine operable to inferentially apply business process attributes to features within the digital model data set responsive to information linked to such features within the knowledge base data sets accessible to the knowledge base data set engine.

8. The data processing system of Claim 7 wherein the knowledge base data set engine is operable to automatically inferentially apply a quality information business process attribute to a feature included within the digital model data set.

9. The data processing system of Claim 7 wherein the knowledge base data set engine is operable to automatically inferentially apply a safety information business process attribute to a feature included within the digital model data set.

10. The data processing system of Claim 7 wherein the knowledge base data set engine is operable to automatically inferentially apply a revision information business process attribute to a feature included within the digital model data set.

11. The data processing system of Claim 7 wherein the knowledge base data set engine is operable to automatically inferentially apply an information address link attribute to a feature included within the digital model data set.

12. A method of operating a digital design system comprising:  
defining digital model data set information specifying the structure of  
components within an assembly;  
defining business process attributes linked to particular features specified  
within the digital model data set;  
displaying instances of features within the digital model data set which are  
associated with such business process attributes; and  
displaying business process attribute display instances associated with  
business process attributes linked to the displayed features within the digital model  
data set.

13. The method of Claim 12 wherein the business process attribute  
comprises a quality information attribute and wherein the business process attribute  
display instance specifies quality level information associated with the feature to  
which the quality information business attribute is linked.

14. The method of Claim 12 wherein the business process attribute  
comprises a safety information attribute and wherein the business process attribute  
display instance specifies safety level information associated with the feature to which  
the safety information business attribute is linked.

15. The method of Claim 12 wherein the business process attribute  
comprises a revision information attribute and wherein the business process attribute  
display instance specifies revision information associated with the feature to which  
the revision information business attribute is linked.

16. The method of Claim 12 wherein the business process attribute  
comprises an information source link and wherein the business process attribute  
display instance is operable, when activated by a user, to access a network address at  
which information is stored that is associated with the feature to which the  
information source link is linked.

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18. A data processing system, comprising:

a user interface operable to display information to a user and to receive commands from a user accessing a digital model data set;

a digital model data set comprising data associated with the form of mechanical structures;

a business process attribute data set linked to the digital model data set such that various elements within the digital model data set are linked to business process attributes within the business process attribute data set such that users of the data processing system are displayed business process attribute display elements when a display element associated with a mechanical component defined by the digital model data set is displayed to the user; and

a knowledge base data set engine coupled to and operable to access various knowledge base data sets, the knowledge base data set engine operable to inferentially apply business process attributes to features within the digital model data set responsive to information linked to such features within the knowledge base data sets accessible to the knowledge base data set engine.

19. The data processing system of Claim 18 wherein the business process attribute comprises quality information defining a quality level parameter associated with a component represented in the digital model data set.

20. The data processing system of Claim 18 wherein the business process attribute comprises safety information defining a safety level parameter associated with a component represented in the digital model data set.

21. The data processing system of Claim 18 wherein the business process attribute comprises revision information defining a revision parameter associated with a component represented in the digital model data set.

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23. The system of data processing system of Claim 22 wherein the information address attribute comprises a hypertext link address that when displayed to a user of the system and activated by the user of a system will result in the activation of a browser program which is operable to retrieve information stored at the information attribute hypertext link address.